



Two Mississippi Museums

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Museum of Mississippi History

Website: <http://www.mmh.mdah.ms.gov/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/museumofmshistory/>

Mississippi Civil Rights Museum

Website: <http://www.mcrm.mdah.ms.gov/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mscivilrightsmuseum/>

Two New Mississippi Museums Opening Dec. 9

The Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum—two new interconnected museums that will take visitors through the sweep of Mississippi history and the state’s role as ground zero in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement—will open in Jackson, MS on December 9, 2017.

The museums will combine interactive visitor experiences with exhibits showcasing artifacts including a 500-year-old dugout canoe discovered submerged in mud on the bank of a lake and the doors of the Bryant Grocery that 14-year-old Emmett Till walked through before the fateful encounter with the shopkeeper that led to his murder in the summer of 1955.

“These museums are telling the stories of Mississippi history in all of their complexity,” said Katie Blount, director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, which operates the two new museums. “We are shying away from nothing. Understanding where we are today is shaped in every way by where we have come from in our past.”

The museums will open with a ceremony beginning at 11 a.m., December 9, on the museum grounds, the culmination of Mississippi’s bicentennial celebration. Speakers will include Mrs. Myrlie Evers, Congressman John Lewis, Governor Phil Bryant, and former governors Haley Barbour and William F. Winter. Free tickets for opening weekend tours offered online sold out in less than 48 hours. The ribbon-cutting ceremony itself remains open to all visitors.

Mississippi’s former history museum was closed after Hurricane Katrina ripped apart its roof in 2005. The two new museums will expand the way the state’s history is presented, from

prehistoric times to the Civil Rights Movement and beyond. Both museums will use Mississippi's rich tradition of storytelling to showcase the compelling lives of ordinary people who made extraordinary contributions to the state and the nation. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum will be the only state-operated civil rights museum in the nation.

The Mississippi Legislature provided \$90 million for the museums. Another \$19 million has been raised through private donations for exhibits and endowments. The two museums share a lobby, auditorium, classrooms, collection storage, and exhibit workshop for a facility that covers a total of 200,000 square feet—the equivalent of three and a half football fields.

The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum's eight galleries chronicle the events of the national Civil Rights Movement that took place in Mississippi. In the first and second galleries, a timeline illustrates the history of Africans in Mississippi, slavery, and the origins of the Jim Crow era.

Monuments memorialize people who were victims of lynching in the state. The heart of the museum is the third gallery—a central space lit by a dramatic light sculpture that plays the museum's theme song, "This Little Light of Mine"—highlighting people who laid down their lives for the Movement.

The next four galleries focus on the years 1945-1975. Visitors will see the mug shots of every Freedom Rider arrested in Mississippi and hear the stories of Civil Rights Veterans such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Vernon Dahmer, and Medgar Evers. The eighth and final gallery—Where Do We Go From Here?—challenges visitors to consider their own communities as they reflect on their experience at the museum and observe how the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi has served as an example for movements all over the world.

The Museum of Mississippi History's theme—One Mississippi, Many Stories—runs throughout the eight galleries that explore the many diverse people who contributed to the state's history from prehistoric times to present day. The first three galleries highlight the complex societies of Native American people, the exploration and settlement of Europeans and enslaved Africans, and the transition from a territorial period to statehood. The remaining galleries cover the evolution of communities in Mississippi, from the rise of slavery and cotton, through secession, Civil War and Reconstruction, and progress through major twentieth-century events, advancements in agriculture and industry, social change movements, and the dominance of arts and culture. These stories are personalized through the world's most extensive collection of Mississippi artifacts.

Visitors will also marvel at the skill and craftsmanship of Native Americans evident in carved stone vessels from thousands of years ago. Book lovers will delight in Eudora Welty's manual



typewriter. Music fans will thrill to the sounds of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Bo Diddley when they step into a recreated Delta juke joint.

The museum complex was designed by ECD of Jackson, MS, an architectural consortium composed of Eley Guild Hardy, Cooke Douglass Farr Lemons, Ltd., and Dale Partners, in consultation with Perkins+Will of Durham, NC. Thrash Commercial Contractors of Brandon, MS, began construction in December 2013.

Exhibits for the Museum of Mississippi History were designed by The Design Minds, Inc. of Fairfax, VA, and are being fabricated by 1220 of Nashville, TN. Northern Light Productions of Boston, MA, is developing the audiovisual components. Hilferty & Associates of Athens, OH, designed the exhibits for the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. Exhibit Concepts Inc. of The Vandalia, OH, is fabricating exhibits and Monadnock Media of Hatfield, MA, is developing the audiovisual elements for the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum.

Gallery Information: Museum of Mississippi History

<http://www.mmh.mdah.ms.gov/>

One Mississippi, Many Stories. Step into the museum and be transported back in time to experience the stories of Mississippians over thousands of years. Throughout the galleries, you will explore interactive exhibits, see engaging artifacts, and hear stories from people who shaped Mississippi.

1. THE FIRST PEOPLES (13,000 BC–AD 1518) Native American mounds rise up across Mississippi's landscape today. Who built these mysterious earthworks, and why? This gallery explores the sophisticated cultures of the first people to call this land home. Walk through time as you view archaeological finds—including a 500-year-old dugout canoe.

2. CULTURAL CROSSROADS: NATIVE AMERICANS, EUROPEANS, AND AFRICANS (1519–1798)

Before 1519, Native Americans were the only people living in the land that would become Mississippi. By 1798, the non-native population had grown to over 8,000. Dramatic artifacts—including wrought-iron slave shackles—illustrate this time of transition. Visitors can compare Native American and European military strategies and build your own model fort and examine how beads, bells, and coins were traded among cultures.

3. JOINING THE UNITED STATES: TERRITORY, STATEHOOD, AND TREATIES (1799–1832)

Cultural clashes raged throughout the Mississippi Territory in the years preceding statehood. European settlers poured into the region to claim farm land, bringing enslaved Africans with them. Mississippi joined the United States in 1817. Explore these turbulent years: See a rare 20-star U. S. flag, inspect weapons of “frontier justice” including an early Bowie knife, and examine federal laws that forced the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations to leave their ancestral homelands.

4. COTTON KINGDOM: COTTON, ENSLAVEMENT, AND THE CIVIL WAR (1833–1865) By 1840, there were more enslaved African Americans than whites living in Mississippi. White Mississippians were determined to preserve slavery, even if it meant leaving the United States that they had so recently joined. What would become of “Cotton Kingdom”—and newly freed African Americans—during four long years of war? Compare the lives of an enslaved family, a yeoman farmer, and a wealthy planter by peering into life-sized models of their homes. Examine how battlefield medical techniques advanced medical science.

5. THE WORLD REMADE: FREEDOM, RECONSTRUCTION, AND REGRESSION (1866–1902)

The end of slavery and the Civil War brought the challenge of reconstructing a war-torn state. How would Mississippians rebuild their economy? Forced to make the most of natural resources, timber companies cleared over a million acres of new farmland in the Delta. But the majority of farmers were trapped in unfair sharecropping systems, even as the promise of new opportunities in America drew immigrants from across the globe.

6. PROMISE AND PERIL: PROGRESSIVISM, REPRESSION, AND WORLD WAR I (1903–1927)

The century began with promise. But rising floodwaters from the Mississippi River ravaged homes and businesses in 1927, and boll weevils infested cotton crops across the state. Explore the changes and challenges Mississippians faced at the turn of the century.

7. BRIDGING HARDSHIP: GREAT DEPRESSION, NEW DEAL, AND WORLD WAR II (1928–1945)

The Great Depression crippled new industry in Mississippi, leaving thousands without jobs. The average Mississippian made less than ten dollars a month, so families grew their own food and hunted to survive. World War II brought further transformations as more than ten percent of the state's population signed up for military service. Explore how New Deal programs put Mississippians back to work and established the first state parks and mail a postcard to your friends from the replica 1930s general store. See a baseball glove owned by "Willie" Mitchell—the Mississippi native who once struck out Babe Ruth.

8. FORGING AHEAD: CIVIL RIGHTS, DIVERSIFICATION, AND INNOVATION (1946–PRESENT)

Mississippi was thrust into the national spotlight as the struggle for equal rights raged in courtrooms, schools, and businesses across the state. Technology, industry, and immigration continued to change the social landscape of the state, and a diverse array of activists, artisans, entrepreneurs, politicians, and everyday citizens contributed to Mississippi's story. See the crown Mary Ann Mobley wore when she won the Miss America pageant in 1958. Survey the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina and other natural disasters.

9. REFLECTIONS At the end of your journey through the Museum of Mississippi History, you are invited to share your own history. What story will you contribute? Step into our video reflections booth to tell us about your memories of Mississippi. Your comments could be integrated into Reflections areas throughout the museum.

Gallery Information: Mississippi Civil Rights Museum

<https://mcrm.mdah.ms.gov/>

The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum focuses on the years 1945–1976 when Mississippi was ground zero for the national Civil Rights Movement. Eight galleries encircle a central space called “This Little Light of Mine.” The dramatic, 30-foot tall sculpture glows brighter and the music of the Movement swells as visitors gather.

1. MISSISSIPPI’S FREEDOM STRUGGLE sets the context for the Civil Rights Movement. Read quotations from the men, women, and children who risked their lives in the courageous campaign to gain freedom. Images of the people affected by slavery reflect the inhumanity of the institution and their determination to end it.

2. MISSISSIPPI IN BLACK AND WHITE covers the years 1865 to 1941, from the end of the Civil War through Reconstruction and beyond. Black Mississippians emerged from slavery as free citizens and established strong communities—despite oppression by white Mississippians. Explore the essential role of church and family in this gallery, and read about the African Americans who rose as leaders. Inspect artifacts—such as a “colored” entrance sign and tools used by an African American blacksmith—to begin to understand the trials of this period. Five monoliths engraved with the names of lynching victims rise over this gallery.

3. THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE is the heart of the museum, a soaring space filled with natural light from large windows. Civil rights activists are honored with words and images, and the music of the Movement emanates from a dramatic light sculpture. As more visitors gather and interact with the sculpture—adding their own “light”—it shines brighter and the music grows stronger.

4. A CLOSED SOCIETY explores the years 1941 to 1960 when the experiences of black Mississippians who served in World War II fueled the Civil Rights Movement. Hear first-hand accounts of veterans who fought for their country and returned to Mississippi motivated to fight for equality. Step into two immersive theaters to understand how the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and teenager Emmett Till’s murder ignited the Civil Rights Movement. Step into a segregated classroom—the experience of white Mississippi students on one side, juxtaposed with the experiences of African-American Mississippi students on the other. Walk past the original doors of the Bryant Grocery store where 14-year-old Emmett Till had the fateful encounter with the store owners wife that would ultimate lead to his murder.

5. A TREMOR IN THE ICEBERG During the early 1960s saw a new generation of activists who brought a fresh urgency to the Civil Rights Movement. Activist Bob Moses described these times as the “tremor in the middle of the iceberg.” Engage with a touch screen interactive exhibit to read personal stories of people who participated in the Freedom Rides in 1961 and

see the police mug shot of every rider arrested lining the walls of the gallery. A re-created jail cell and a tear gas canister used during the integration of the University of Mississippi offer a sense of the brutal conditions and retaliation that activists faced. See powerful artifacts including the rifle used to assassinate civil rights activist Medgar Evers and experience an immersive theater commemorating Evers' life and work.

6. I QUESTION AMERICA, covering the years 1963 and 1964, portrays the people who gathered in churches, Masonic halls, and community centers as local movements grew into coordinated state campaigns. Youths and seniors, middle class and poor, urban and rural people alike cast their ballots in a “Freedom Vote” and went to the Democratic National Convention to demand that their voices be heard. In a reconstructed country church visitors can hear the compelling story of Freedom Summer. Use the interactive touch screen displays to explore Sovereignty Commission files and witness the stories of Freedom Summer volunteers. Shards of glass from a bombed church, a burned cross, and an FBI fingerprint kit are among the many artifacts on display.

7. BLACK EMPOWERMENT highlights the empowerment that took hold in black communities from 1965 through the mid-1970s, urged on by successes such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. A decade that began with the Freedom Riders and sit-ins ended with black leaders running Head Start programs and serving as members of the state legislature. Explore the successes that black citizens faced as well as the tragedies—including the murder of Vernon F. Dahmer Sr. A section of his bullet-pocked pickup truck rests beneath the photo mural of four Dahmer sons, all in the uniforms of their active duty military service, staring down at the charred crater where their home once stood.

8. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? This museum, like the movement it is named for, is intended to be a powerful and transformative experience. In this last gallery, visitors can reflect on what they have experienced here. To inspire conversation and consideration, read the words of Mississippians from all walks of life as they discuss the progress our state has made since the Civil Rights era and the challenges that remain. In this gallery, we invite you to share your thoughts and leave comments on your visit here.

Media Contact Information

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Photos: Two Mississippi Museums

Photographs of both museums: [Dropbox link](#)

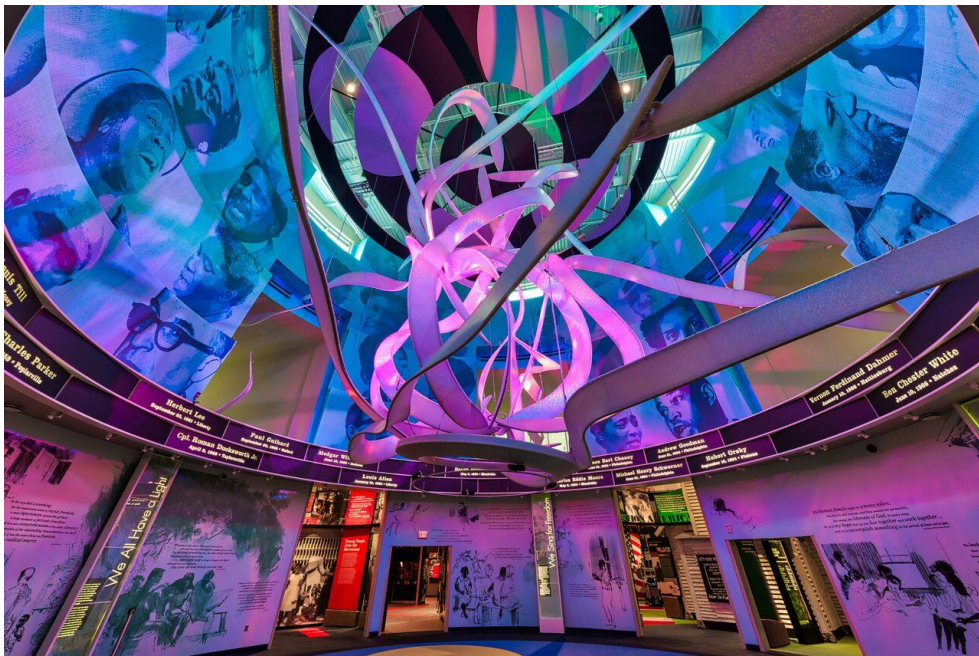
Selection from Mississippi Civil Rights Museum:



The original doors to the Bryant Grocery and Meat Market where 14-year-old Emmett Till's whistle at the shopkeeper's white wife led to his lynching.



This classroom reproduction illustrates the differences between schools for white students and those for African-American students during segregation.



“This Little Light of Mine,” the signature sculpture in the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum which lights up as visitors pass through the main gallery.